

# BOOK REVIEWS

CALIFORNIA MEDICINE does not review all books sent to it by the publishers. A list of new books received is carried in the Advertising Section.

**THE CASE FOR AMERICAN MEDICINE—A Realistic Look at Our Health Care System**—Harry Schwartz. David McKay Company, Inc., New York City, 1972. 240 pages, \$6.95.

During the past few years American medicine has been under fire from all sides. The health care "crisis" has been a popular theme for the liberal press, congressional critiques and scholarly studies of varying quality. Now an outstanding scholar has found that there is something good about American medicine. Harry Schwartz, an economist and historian with a particular interest in Soviet economy, has now produced a splendid small volume intended to be "a realistic look at our health care system."

Professor Schwartz reviews in depth the doctor shortage, the medical cost explosion, the future of HMO's, and concludes with two chapters on lessons from abroad and policies for the future. His most important message is the need to learn from the past and not to rush blindly into revolutionary changes. Professor Schwartz's critical analysis of the potential economic disaster of Health Maintenance Organizations is of the greatest importance.

This is indeed a sober and sensible view of the accomplishments, failures and faults of the American system. It should be required reading for all health professionals, particularly those who are pressing for drastic and potentially disastrous Federal legislative change.

J. ENGLEBERT DUNPHY, MD

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**THE UPPER CERVICAL SPINE—Regional Anatomy, and Traumatology—A Systematic Radiological Atlas and Textbook**—Detlef von Torkius, MD; and Walter Gehle, MD, Orthopaedic Clinic and Out-patient Department, University Hospital, Hamburg; Translator, L. S. Michaelis, MD, Soudbury, England. Grune & Stratton, Inc., 111 Fifth Ave., New York, N.Y. (10003), 1972. 101 pages, 244 illustrations, \$15.00.

The contents of this book stem largely from the experience of the authors working in an orthopedic clinic in the University Hospital in Hamburg, Germany. The emphasis throughout this small volume is on the morphology, congenital abnormalities, inflammatory conditions and chronic and degenerative changes that may involve the first few cervical vertebrae. The illustrations for the most part are of excellent quality and are well-marked and annotated. The book is particularly good in the chapters devoted to anomalies and malformations.

The book has many references, both in German and in English, and is well-indexed. It can be heartily recommended as a reference text for those interested in abnormalities involving the upper portion of the cervical spine.

ELLIOTT C. LASSER, MD

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**STEROID HORMONES AND BRAIN FUNCTION—UCLA Forum in Medical Sciences—Number 15**—Charles H. Sawyer and Roger A. Gorski, Editors. University of California Press, 2223 Fulton Street, Berkeley, Ca. (94720). 400 pages, \$30.00.

The UCLA Conference on Steroid Hormones and Brain Function included 31 formal presentations that employed behavioral, neurophysiological and cell biology techniques to attack the problem of whether and how steroids affect brain function. The presentations and discussions leave no doubt that the brain is an important target organ for androgens, estrogens, progesterone and the adrenocortical hormones, and that, difficult as the subject is, real progress is being made in advancing our knowledge of the effects of these hormones on the brain.

The conference was divided into six sections: electro-

physiological and behavioral influences of adrenal steroids, electrophysiological correlates of sex steroid actions, perinatal influences of steroids on hypothalamohypophyseal function and sexual behavior, hormones and control of sexual behavior in the adult, steroid feedback and brain pituitary mechanisms and clinical correlates.

One of the more interesting findings that emerged from the conference was the fact that not only corticosteroids, but also estrogens and androgens appear to be able to produce a reversal of spontaneous firing patterns in sensitive neurons. For instance, if the spontaneous rate is high, steroid administration will cause a decrease in rate, and *vice versa*. While it is a long step from observing the reversal of single unit activity by steroids to recognition of the biological effects of the reversal, the apparently global nature of the effect may provide a handle for subsequent research on its biological significance.

An outstanding feature of the volume is the handling of the discussions after the presentations and the summarizing discussions after each section. The editors have managed to leave the spontaneity of the conferees uncut (without wasting space), and in reading these useful interludes between papers, one has the feeling that the conferees themselves found the conference to be very stimulating.

It is extremely unfortunate, on the other hand, that the publishers decided to lump the figures for each presentation at the end of the paper. This decision results in the annoying need for the reader to go back and forth in the book if the point being made is illustrated.

Finally, there were only two papers that used human subjects, and unfortunately one feels that we are still a very long way from clinical application of the current neuroendocrine research.

MARY F. DALLMAN, PHD  
VICTOR S. SCHNEIDER, MD

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**INTRODUCTION TO NEUROSCIENCE**—Edited by Jeff Minckler, MD, PhD, Director of Laboratories, Eisenhower Medical Center, Palm Desert, California. The C. V. Mosby Company, 11830 Westline Industrial Drive, St. Louis, Mo. (63141), 1972. 420 pages with 661 illustrations, \$22.50.

With the revolution in medical school curricula over the past few years, it has become fashionable to present all the basic science approaches to the nervous system in a single neuroscience course. This volume edited by, and largely written by, J. Minckler is an attempt to provide a comprehensive text suitable for such a pre-clinical neuroscience course. The emphasis is still overwhelmingly morphological with only two brief chapters devoted to all of neuropharmacology, neurochemistry, and neurophysiology, but the scope is considerably broader than the standard neuroanatomy text. Innovative chapters on neuroradiology, tissue culture, experimental neurobiology, and psychobiology are welcome additions to the usual format. Illustrations and diagrams are used generously, and are generally clear and pertinent. Some criticism may be leveled at the photomicrographs, particularly the electron micrographs, which are often poorly reproduced.

In addition to use as a medical school text, this volume will be helpful to students in their clinical years and to neurology residents, but it is too simplified for use as a reference resource by the specialist.

ARTHUR K. ASBURY, MD